

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00
CIAE-00 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 DODE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 STR-04 AGRE-00 /057 W
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R 061845Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5261
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB EPAP, GY
SUBJECT: SUGAR STRIKE ENTERS SECOND WEEK

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 0213, (B) GEORGETOWN 1856, (C) GEORGETOWN 2131

BEGIN SUMMARY: AN INDUSTRY-WIDE SUGAR STRIKE, NOW IN ITS SECOND WEEK, HAS CUT SHARPLY INTO GUYANA'S SUGAR PRODUCTION. THE GUYANA SUGAR CORPORATION (GUYSUCO) AND THE GOVERNMENT HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS IN ATTRACTING A FEW OF THE STRIKING WORKERS BACK TO THEIR JOBS AND APPEALING TO THE PATRIOTISM OF GUYANESE IN GENERAL, HAVE ATTRACTED SOME VOLUNTEER WORKERS INTO THE CANE FIELDS. ALSO, THE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE(GDF), PEOPLE'S MILITIA (PN), AND GUYANA NATURAL SERVICE(GNS) CONTINUE TO WORK ON SOME ESTATES. REPORTEDLY DAILY PRODUCTION HAS RISEN FROM LESS THAN 20 PER CENT OF NORMAL PRODUCTION DURING THE FIRST WEEK TO ABOUT 50 PER CENT. END SUMMARY.

1. APPROXIMATELY 22,000 WORKERS CUT CANE DURING A NORMAL HARVEST. THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS TO HAVE ABOUT 5,000
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WORKERS (AS OPPOSED TO 3,000 THE FIRST WEEK) BACK AT THEIR JOBS PLUS UNSPECIFIED NUMBERS OF GDF, PN AND GNS PERSONNEL. AN ACTIVE CAMPAIGN TO ATTRACT VOLUNTEERS IS UNDERWAY AND APPARENTLY HAVING SOME SUCCESS. CONCURRENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS ISSUING OPTIMISTIC REPORTS OF AN IMPENDING END TO THE STRIKE, HOPING THEREBY TO DISCOURAGE STRIKERS. THE GOG-OWNED "GUYANA CHRONICLE" HAS QUOTED GUYSUCO

CHAIRMAN HAROLD DAVIS AS STATING THAT 5,675 TONS OF SUGAR OR ABOUT 50 PER CENT OF A NORMAL WEEK'S OUTPUT WERE PRODUCED LAST WEEK. HOWEVER, THE ARTICLE ALSO STATES THAT THE SUGAR INDUSTRY LOSES ABOUT US\$400,000 AND THE WORKERS FORFEIT US\$240,000 IN WAGES EVERY DAY THAT THE STRIKE CONTINUES. NEITHER CAN AFFORD TO SUSTAIN THESE LEVELS OF LOSS FOR VERY LONG.

2. THE AMOUNT OF MONEY DEMANDED BY GAWU LEADERS FOR SETTLEMENT OF STRIKE IS G\$215 MILLION OR \$8,000 PER WORKER AS THEIR SHARE OF 1974 AND 1975 PROFITS. THE GOVERNMENT IS IN NO POSITION TO COME FORTH WITH THIS MONEY EVEN IF IT WERE SO INCLINED.

3. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM AND OPPOSITION LEADER CHEDDI JAGAN ARE ENGAGED IN A POLITICAL STRUGGLE TO DETERMINE WHO HAS THE MOST EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE OVER GUYANESE AND IN EFFECT WHO CAN HOLD OUT THE LONGEST. AT THE MOMENT, IT APPEARS THAT DESPITE THE LOSSES TO THE ECONOMY THAT THE STRIKE IS CAUSING EACH DAY, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE GAINING THE UPPER HAND AS PRODUCTION IS INCREASING.

4. BURNHAM AND OTHER GOG LEADERS ARE FEARFUL, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE THE STRIKE IS DEFINITELY BORKEN, THAT THE OPPOSITION WILL ATTEMPT TO CAUSE RIOTS AND CARRY OUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SABOTAGE BECAUSE THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING THIS BATTLE ARE SERIOUS. FOR JAGAN A LOSS WOULD MEAN A SHARP DECLINE IN HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

5. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, THE STRIKE HAS COMPOUNDED AN ALREADY SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS. IT APPEARS THAT THE GOG, LACKING PROSPECTS FOR ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMY, IS PREPARING FOR TIGHTENING UP SECURITY CONTROLS AND ITS LEGAL APPARATUS FOR DEALING WITH UNREST, SABOTAGE AND RIOTS (SEE REF. C FOR DESCRIPTION OF NEW LAWS). BLACKEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUGAR, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, LABOR STRIKES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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